

the various foxes described by Philippi*, but most, if not all, of them would seem to have been the large Chilian fox (*Pseudalopex culpæa*) of different ages and sexes. It has been asserted—whether rightly or wrongly—that the owners of a farm near Santiago amused themselves by sending in to the aged Director of the Museum specimens of their local fox, which they labelled with various fictitious localities in distant parts of Chili, and that these became the bases of many of Philippi's species.

BIBLIOGRAPHICAL NOTICES.

British Mammals. Written and Illustrated by A. THORBURN, F.Z.S.
With 50 Plates in Colour and Pen-and-ink Sketches in the Text.
In Two Volumes. Vol. I. Longmans, Green, and Co. London,
1920.

MR. THORBURN and his publishers are to be congratulated on producing what is, perhaps, the most beautifully illustrated work on British Mammals which has ever appeared. The first volume, now before us, deals with the Chiroptera, Insectivora, and Carnivora, and just enters upon the Rodentia by giving accounts of the squirrel and dormouse.

The plates form the chief and most valuable feature of the book. Taken as a whole, they are remarkable for their good drawing and for their superb and faithful colouring. Many of them, indeed, are of exquisite beauty. The pictures of the pine-martin, pole-cat, fox, seals, and, above all, of the mole are especially attractive. That of the wild-cat is excellent as regards colour, but the reviewer cannot decide whether he likes the pose chosen or not—the figure looks a little too like that of a domestic kitten at play. The attitudes of the shrews are also not quite convincing; and the drawings of the bats, though very artistic, leave something to be desired as regards detail. In the latter case, no doubt, the difficulty of procuring living material of many species has seriously handicapped the artist.

The text naturally is of minor importance. It is, however, quite adequate for its main purpose of linking together and giving point to the beautiful pictures, which form the real contents of the book. It is attractively written, and will no doubt stimulate those younger naturalists fortunate enough to command the service of such a

* Arch. f. Nat. 1903, p. 155 *et seqq.*

sumptuous guide to the mammals of their country. We would suggest, however, to Mr. Thorburn that he should consult a systematist with regard to nomenclature: the continued use of such archaic generic names as "*Vesperugo*" is to be deprecated.

The Natural History of South Africa.—Mammals. In Four Volumes. By F. W. FITZSIMONS, F.Z.S. &c., Director, Port Elizabeth Museum. London: Longmans, Green, and Co. Svo. Vol. 1 (xiv+178), 2 (xi+194), 1919; 3 (xiii+278), 4 (xix+271), 1920.

MR. FITZSIMONS is the fortunate possessor of a sound first-hand field-knowledge of the fauna of South Africa. He has great powers of shrewd observation, and is gifted with a very pleasing style. In these first four volumes of his *Natural History* he gives an excellent and most refreshing account of the habits, life-histories, and economic importance of the mammals of South Africa. While, from the standpoint of the pure systematist, these volumes are, perhaps, of little importance, they cannot fail to assist those who endeavour to interpret variations of form by differences of function.

The chief value of the work lies, however, in a totally different direction. The rapid decline and extinction of so many of the larger South-African mammals is, no doubt, to be regarded as the necessary, though regrettable, concomitant of advancing civilization. But just as in Britain, so in South Africa—ignorance, self-seeking, and vandalism march considerably ahead of civilization. The country, whether we view it with the disinterested eyes of science or sentiment, or with the more selfish vision of economics and industry, has been made much the poorer by the relentless persecution of all wild mammals, and particularly of the smaller Carnivora. It is to be hoped, therefore, that Mr. Fitzsimons's book will find its way into the hands of all the younger citizens of South Africa. Such an account can hardly fail to arouse enthusiasm in the breasts of the rising generation, and should lead them, in due course, to take a keen and enlightened interest in the welfare and preservation of what is now left of the fauna of their land.

A full systematic list of South-African species and subspecies of the various orders dealt with is given in each of the four volumes. The technical names in these lists were examined in the Mammal Department of the British Museum, and it is believed that not many errors remain. But some errors of nomenclature are still to be noticed in the text of the first volume and in the legends of some of the illustrations. These are small matters, which can easily be put right in future impressions of the book. It remains to be said that each volume is pleasingly illustrated by numerous photographs, and that the printing and binding is up to the standard expected from Longmans.